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## G. B. GRAY'S COMMENTARY ON NUMBERS.

*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Numbers* (T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1903), by Prof. G. B. Gray, D.D., of Mansfield College, Oxford, is the fifth of the Old Testament books of the International Critical Commentary to appear. The aims of this series are already well known: whilst every attention is paid to textual criticism, the greatest care is taken to bring before the reader everything that tends to make the book intelligible. The last English commentary of any independent value was Martin's translation of Keil's work in 1867, and only those who were conversant with German could enjoy the more recent commentaries of Dillmann (1886) or Strack (1894). Biblical study has made great strides since Keil's day, and even Dillman's careful studies are in many respects a long way behind present-day requirements. Prof. Gray's work is therefore sure of a welcome among those who desire to keep pace with the progress of modern research.

For a variety of reasons Numbers is one of the most difficult books of the Old Testament to interpret. The text, it is true, has suffered only slightly, but the literary problems are of extreme complexity, and for the study of Hebrew archaeology the book is a veritable mine, from which, however, only skilful hands can be trusted to extract the ore. As regards the literary criticism, if JE can be recognized with comparative ease, it is exceedingly difficult to divide it into its constituent parts, and although there are signs enough of its composite origin, there is a general lack of agreement among scholars who have endeavoured to distinguish J from E. About three-fourths of the book belongs to the late Priestly School. But even this is clearly not from one hand. Critics have recognized a ground-work (P<sup>g</sup>), the priestly history of sacred institutions, to which has been added later and secondary (P<sup>s</sup>) matter, partly narrative, partly legal, the work of various hands (300-250 B.C.). Moreover, there still remain certain elements of a legal character which cannot belong to the preceding, and although they betray the priestly hand they are of unknown date and origin (hence styled P<sup>\*</sup>). The elimination of P<sup>s</sup> is helped by certain positive criteria, but it is less easy to determine the limits of the other portions, and in addition to this difficulty many perplexing problems relating to the antiquity of P's legal and religious institutions come under consideration.

Old features are rightly perceived in the Trial of Jealousy (v. 11-31), in portions of the laws of the Nazirites (vi. 1-21), in the Sacred Tassels (xv. 37-41), and in the laws concerning defilement

and taboos (v. 1-4, xix). These and other matters of archaeological value are discussed by Gray in an interesting and extremely thorough manner. He has been at great pains to cull illustrations, analogies, and parallels from outside the Semitic world, and those who recognize the importance of comparative religion will not be surprised that Frazer's *Golden Bough* has proved a storehouse of treasures; indeed, perhaps the most valuable feature of Gray's commentary, apart from its exhaustive handling of the literary criticism, is the prominence given to discussions of Hebrew institutions from the comparative standpoint. As he points out, a rite incorporated from popular custom loses the definite meaning which it originally possessed, and subsequently "it has read into it a variety of new meanings consonant with the religious belief of the times, and, generally, completely at variance with the original significance" (p. 47). This applies not only to the Trial of Jealousy, but to a number of other customary usages which are preserved in Leviticus and Numbers, and the importance of comparative religion lies in the fact that it frequently enables us to trace the development of a rite throughout its various stages. Among the curious superstitions and beliefs which find parallels or analogies among other peoples may be mentioned the vegetating sticks (p. 217), the force of the curse (p. 328), and the bronze serpent (p. 276). À propos of the "holy dust" (v. 17, p. 51), Gray reminds us of the dust from Mohammed's grave, "a cure for every disease"; we may also compare the sacred dust (*ḥēnānā*) of Syrian lore, and the rites from Upper Macedonia and the Yezidi's referred to in these pages (1902, p. 431). It may also be added that since this commentary was published, further evidence of serpent-worship has come to light in the discovery at Gezer of a model of a serpent in connexion with a shrine (*Pal. Explor. Fund Quarterly Statement*, 1903, p. 222 sq.).

As we should expect from the author of *Hebrew Proper Names*, the treatment of i. 5-15, xiii. 4 sq., &c., is particularly helpful and suggestive, and Hommel's theories, familiar to readers of *Ancient Hebrew Tradition*, are justly exposed. The longer or detached notes in not a few cases are veritable monographs, and Gray's discussions of the first-fruits (pp. 225-9), the priestly dues (pp. 236-41), defilement by the dead (pp. 241-8), and a comparison of the festivals of earlier and later times (pp. 404-7) are valuable contributions to the religious history of Israel.

The edition of the Hexateuch by Messrs. Carpenter and Harford-Battersby was an indication of the thoroughness with which the critical study of the Old Testament was being pursued at Oxford, and Prof. Gray, who was associated with that work, is to be congratulated upon the publication of a commentary which is a conspicuous

credit not only to that University, but to English scholarship in general. (On p. 9, l. 3, for הַנִּפְר read הַרִּנְפֹר—a rare instance of a misprint—and to the note on xiii. 27, reference may now be made to Guidi, *Revue Biblique*, 1903, pp. 241-4.)

S. A. COOK.

### BURNEY'S "NOTES ON THE HEBREW TEXT OF KINGS."

THE Rev. C. F. Burney's *Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Kings* (Clarendon Press, 1903), is intended to do for those books what Prof. Driver thirteen years ago did for the books of Samuel. Externally as well as internally the two works form a pair. The needs of beginners are steadily kept in view, questions of grammar are handled with comparative fullness, and since the text of Kings has suffered on the whole to a much less degree than that of Samuel, teachers and lecturers will doubtless be glad to avail themselves of Mr. Burney's book for their classes. Constant reference is made to the ancient versions, and the author's treatment of textual questions is marked with conspicuous caution, which, it need hardly be said, is exactly what is required in a textbook of this kind.

In a short Introduction, Mr. Burney has prepared in condensed form some useful observations on the structure of the Books of Kings, the leading characteristics of the versions, and a helpful synopsis of the synchronisms of the compiler. In an Appendix he has collected the more important contemporary inscriptions which illustrate the books:—the Moabite stone (text and translation), the Siloam inscription, and selections from the Assyrian records of Shalmaneser II, and the third campaign of Sennacherib.

The grammatical and syntactical notes are all that can be desired. Mr. Burney has also taken pains to introduce the student to an appreciation of the stylistic characteristics betrayed by the various writers (e. g. in the narratives on the northern kingdom, p. 208 sq.). Particular prominence is given to the phraseology of the Deuteronomic Redactor, a full list of whose phrases is collected upon pp. xiii-xv. Equally valuable is the careful attention paid throughout to the Septuagint (cp. especially pp. 163-6: a comparison of the Hebrew and Greek recensions of the history of Jeroboam). Mention must also be made of the admirable series of critical notes on the difficult passages containing the account of Solomon's building operations;